

Section C · Flamingo — Prose

CBSE Class 12 English Core (301) · Section C = 40 marks · 8 prose chapters · Ultimate Revision Sheet

60-SECOND RECALL — the eight chapters

The Last Lesson	Alphonse Daudet · Linguistic chauvinism ; Franz, M. Hamel
Lost Spring	Anees Jung · Child labour, poverty ; Saheb, Mukesh
Deep Water	William Douglas · Overcoming fear ; drowning at YMCA pool
The Rattrap	Selma Lagerlöf · World as a rattrap ; peddler, Edla
Indigo	Louis Fischer · Champaran, 1917 ; Gandhi, Rajkumar Shukla
Poets and Pancakes	Asokamitran · Gemini Studios , satire, make-up department
The Interview	Christopher Silvester · Umberto Eco ; interviews as intrusion vs art
Going Places	A. R. Barton · Adolescent fantasy ; Sophie, Danny Casey

1. The Last Lesson — Alphonse Daudet

THE ESSENTIALS **Setting:** Alsace-Lorraine, France, after the **Franco-Prussian War**. Prussia has ordered that only **German** be taught.

Characters: **Franz** (the narrator, a lazy schoolboy), **M. Hamel** (the French teacher of 40 years), village elders including **old Hauser**.

Plot: Franz arrives late, fearing punishment, and finds the class unusually silent and villagers seated at the back. M. Hamel announces it is the **last French lesson**. Franz suddenly values what he has ignored. M. Hamel blames himself and the parents as much as the children. At the end, unable to speak, he writes “**Vive La France!**” on the blackboard.

Themes: **linguistic chauvinism** · the pain of losing one’s language and identity · **procrastination** — “we always have plenty of time, we shall learn tomorrow” · **patriotism**.

THE LINE EXAMINERS WANT “When a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison.”

Language is identity; losing it is a deeper defeat than losing territory.

2. Lost Spring — Anees Jung

THE ESSENTIALS **Subtitle:** “Stories of Stolen Childhood”. Two parts.

Part 1 — Saheb-e-Alam (“lord of the universe”, an ironic name): a ragpicker from Dhaka, now in **Seemapuri**, Delhi. Garbage is **gold** to the children but a means of survival to adults. He later takes a job at a tea stall — he earns 800 rupees and meals, **but loses his freedom**; the steel canister is heavier than his bag.

Part 2 — Mukesh: born into a family of **bangle-makers in Firozabad**. 20,000 children work in glass furnaces in dangerous conditions, losing their eyesight. Trapped by the **vicious circle** of **sahukars**, middlemen, policemen, bureaucrats and politicians. Mukesh alone dares to dream —

he wants to be a **motor mechanic**.

Themes: **child labour** · poverty and exploitation · the **stolen childhood** of the title · the power of daring to dream.

THE CONTRAST TO WRITE Saheb has **freedom but no security**; once employed, he has **security but no freedom**. Mukesh is the only child who **dares to break the tradition** — and even his dream is modest (a mechanic, not a doctor), which is the real measure of how low their horizon has been set.

3. Deep Water — William Douglas

THE ESSENTIALS Two incidents caused the fear: (1) at **three or four** years old, knocked over by a wave at a California beach; (2) at **ten or eleven**, thrown into the deep end of the **YMCA pool** in Yakima by a big bully of a boy.

The drowning: he went down **three times**; describes rising “slowly like an oversized bubble”, the terror, the paralysis, and finally blackness and peace.

The cure: years later he hired an **instructor** who taught him piece by piece over months — breathing, kicking, arm movement — “built a swimmer” of him. Even then fear returned, so he tested himself alone at **Lake Wentworth** and finally **Warm Lake**, and knew the terror had gone.

Themes: **overcoming fear through willpower** · determination and perseverance · fear of death is worse than death.

THE LINE EXAMINERS WANT “All we have to fear is fear itself.” (Roosevelt, quoted by Douglas.) The essay is an argument that fear is defeated not by avoidance but by **deliberate, graded confrontation**.

4. The Rattrap — Selma Lagerlöf

THE ESSENTIALS **Characters:** the **peddler** of rattraps (a vagabond and petty thief), the **old crofter** (who shares food and shows him his 30 kronor), the **ironmaster** (mistakes him for an old regimental comrade, Captain von Stahle), and **Edla Willmansson**, the ironmaster’s daughter.

The metaphor: the whole world is a **giant rattrap** — riches, joys, shelter and food are the **bait**; once tempted, a person is trapped.

Plot: the peddler steals the crofter’s 30 kronor and is caught in his own trap. Edla treats him with **kindness and respect** even after learning he is not a captain. He leaves behind the money and a note signed “**Captain von Stahle**”, having been redeemed.

Themes: the **essential goodness** in every human being · **kindness and understanding** can transform a person · loneliness and the need for human fellowship · materialism as a trap.

WHY EDLA MATTERS The crofter gave him **hospitality**; the ironmaster gave him **hospitality based on a mistake**. Only **Edla** treated him well **knowing** he was a tramp. That unconditional kindness is what redeems him — the chapter’s whole argument.

5. Indigo — Louis Fischer

THE ESSENTIALS Year and place: 1917, Champaran, Bihar. From Fischer's biography of Gandhi.

The trigger: Rajkumar Shukla, a poor illiterate sharecropper, followed Gandhi persistently until he agreed to come.

The problem: under the long-term contract, tenants had to plant 15% of their land with indigo and surrender the entire harvest as rent. When Germany developed synthetic indigo, landlords wanted to release them — for compensation.

The struggle: Gandhi was ordered to leave; he refused and was summoned to court. Thousands of peasants demonstrated spontaneously — the first sign of civil disobedience in India. The case was dropped. Gandhi eventually agreed to a 25% refund — the amount mattered less than the fact that the landlords had surrendered part of their money and prestige.

Beyond politics: Gandhi also worked on education, health and sanitation; Kasturba taught ashram discipline.

Themes: self-reliance · Indian independence begins with ordinary people · leadership by example · satyagraha in practice.

THE ARGUMENT TO MAKE Gandhi accepted only 25% because the principle mattered, not the sum: for the first time the landlords had been forced to yield, which broke the aura of their invincibility. "The battle of Champaran is won" because the peasants learnt they had rights and defenders.

6. Poets and Pancakes — Asokamitran

THE ESSENTIALS Setting: Gemini Studios, Madras — one of India's biggest film studios. The title refers to Pancake, the brand of make-up the studio bought in truckloads.

The make-up department: housed in a building said to have been Robert Clive's stable; a fine example of national integration — a Bengali headed it, then a Maharashtrian, a Dharwar Kannadiga, an Andhra, a Madras Indian Christian, an Anglo-Burmese and local Tamils. Their work turned decent-looking people into "monsters" under the lights.

The narrator's job: cutting out newspaper clippings — which everyone thought was doing nothing.

Subba Rao / Kothamangalam Subbu: No. 2 at Gemini, endlessly loyal and resourceful, a genuinely cheerful and charitable man, though the office boy resented him.

The legal adviser who was in effect the opposite — he ended an actress's career with a single recording.

The visitors: a confusing lecture by an English poet (Stephen Spender) nobody understood, and the Moral Re-Armament Army (MRA) whose plays the studio copied for years.

Themes: gentle satire of studio life · hierarchy and office politics · the gap between appearance and reality · humour and irony.

7. The Interview — Christopher Silvester

THE ESSENTIALS — note the two parts **Part 1** — an essay on the interview as a form. Invented just over **130 years** ago. Opinions are sharply divided:

Against: V. S. Naipaul — “some people are wounded by interviews and lose a part of themselves”; Lewis Carroll had a “horror of the interviewer”; Rudyard Kipling called it “immoral... a crime... an assault”; Saul Bellow likened it to “thumbprints on my windpipe”. Some primitive cultures believed a photograph stole the soul.

For: it is a supremely serviceable medium of communication; “we are the beneficiaries of its vivid, immediate impression of our contemporaries”.

Part 2 — an actual interview with Umberto Eco by Mukund Padmanabhan of *The Hindu*. Eco explains his “empty spaces” theory of using time, his narrative style of academic writing, and why *The Name of the Rose* — a difficult novel about medieval monks — sold **10–15 million** copies. Eco insists he is a university professor who writes novels on Sundays, not a novelist who teaches.

Themes: the interview as intrusion vs art · celebrity and privacy · the unpredictability of public taste.

8. Going Places — A. R. Barton

THE ESSENTIALS **Characters:** Sophie (a working-class schoolgirl and daydreamer), Jansie (her realistic, “down-to-earth” friend, “earmarked for the biscuit factory”), Geoff (Sophie’s older brother, an apprentice mechanic who says little and whom she hero-worships), her father (a heavy, sceptical, sometimes violent man), and Danny Casey (a real young Irish footballer for United).

Plot: Sophie dreams of owning a boutique, of being an actress or a fashion designer. She claims to have met Danny Casey and to have a date with him. Geoff half-believes her; Jansie does not; her father is scornful. She waits alone by the canal for a date that never happens, and returns knowing, underneath, that it was never real.

Themes: adolescent fantasy vs reality · the pull of escapism in a constrained working-class life · hero worship · the tension between dreams and socio-economic limits.

THE CENTRAL POINT Sophie’s dreams are not a character flaw but a response to her circumstances: a cramped house, a dead-end future at the biscuit factory, a father who mocks her. Jansie represents acceptance; Sophie represents escape. The story judges neither — it shows the cost of both.

9. How Section C Questions Work

THE THREE QUESTION SIZES

Type	Marks	What to do
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Extract-based (prose, Flamingo)	6 — 6×1	MCQ and one-line answers from the given passage . Read the extract, not your memory.
Short answer (40–50 words)	2 each — 5 of 6	One clear point + one textual detail + one line of explanation.
Long answer (120–150 words)	5 — 1 of 2	Intro (1 line) + 3 developed points with textual evidence + conclusion linking to the theme.

WHAT SEPARATES A 5 FROM A 3 The 5-mark question asks for *extrapolation beyond the text* — the values, the relevance today, what it implies. An answer that only *retells the story* caps at about half. Always close with what the incident *shows* about human nature or society.

10. Theme → Chapter Lookup for value-based questions

If the question is about...	Use
Language, identity, patriotism	The Last Lesson
Child labour, poverty, stolen childhood	Lost Spring
Overcoming fear, willpower, determination	Deep Water
Kindness transforming a person, materialism	The Rattrap
Leadership, self-reliance, standing up to injustice	Indigo
Satire, hierarchy, appearance vs reality	Poets and Pancakes
Privacy, celebrity, the ethics of journalism	The Interview
Dreams vs reality, adolescence, class	Going Places
Procrastination / "we shall learn tomorrow"	The Last Lesson
Daring to break tradition	Lost Spring (Mukesh)
Compassion and human goodness	The Rattrap (Edla)
Grassroots movement, satyagraha	Indigo

MOST-ASKED QUESTIONS

1. [5M] "The Rattrap" — how does Edla's kindness change the peddler?
2. [5M] "Indigo" — why is the Champaran episode called a turning point in Gandhi's life?
3. [5M] "Lost Spring" — what forces keep the bangle-makers trapped?
4. [5M] "Deep Water" — how did Douglas overcome his fear, and what does it teach?
5. [2M] Why was Franz surprised on reaching school that day?
6. [2M] Why does the author call Saheb "a servant" at the tea stall?
7. [2M] What does the rattrap symbolise?

THE HABIT THAT SCORES — For every chapter, be able to give **three things in ten seconds**: the **author**, the **central theme**, and **one quotable line or incident**. Those three carry almost every short-answer question, and the quotable detail is what lifts a long answer above a plot summary.